

SLA-6



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

821 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

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ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
(213) 874-3333

December 12, 1994

Mr. John Driscoll, General Manager
Department of Airports
#1 World Way
Los Angeles, California 90045

Dear Mr. Driscoll:

As you know we have communicated regarding the issue of helicopter activity at Van Nuys Airport. Unfortunately, I was not able to respond before leaving City Hall; however, this is an issue of such importance that I feel it necessary to communicate with you on it from my new position at Los Angeles County. I wrote to your predecessor, Clifton Moore and to City Attorney James Hahn in September, 1992 to request they consider the legality of banning nighttime helicopter tours. Mr. Hahn has now opined that such a ban may be permissible if it can meet the tests of (a) whether such an action is reasonably adapted to the ends sought (i.e., reduction of noise), (b) whether the interest being protected is a matter of peculiarly local concern, and (c) whether the burden imposed of interstate commerce is outweighed by the local interest supporting the proposed legislation.

You have indicated that while in 1992 and 1993 you received a large number of complaints from residents concerning helicopter tour operators, you now receive an insignificant number of such calls. You state that this is because the VNY tower now normally clears the tour operators to an unrestricted climb to 2,500 feet above mean sea level, which is generally achieved over the Sepulveda Basin. This altitude, which is equivalent to 1700 - 1900 feet above ground level, is high enough not to disturb residents.

I would like to suggest that you evaluate the impact of sightseeing helicopters in a scientific manner, and that you simultaneously seek to obtain "baseline" data on the actual impact of all helicopter activity emanating from Van Nuys. Utilizing the VNY noise monitoring system, which I understand can track the flight tracks and altitudes of

all but the very lowest flying aircraft, I would like to request that you conduct a rigorous, scientific, unannounced survey of helicopter activity. The survey should be conducted on a 24-hour-a-day basis for at least a week, and should serve to identify flight tracks and altitudes of helicopters arriving, departing and transiting VNY. It should also be able to determine the percentage of operations by category, including training flights, tours, media, public safety, charters, etc. I understand the survey could also track usage of the identified VNY helicopter routes and, most importantly, track helicopter flight paths to as far as three to five miles away from VNY. This last is perhaps the most critical because it will enable us to begin to understand why and where the complaints are generated and to identify solutions to our problems.

If the nighttime sightseeing tours are flying at a low altitude over residential areas, thus continuing to create a problem, I would like to request that you immediately initiate a ban on nighttime sightseeing tours as per the City Attorney's letter.

I would also like to request that you enact the proposals of the Van Nuys Airport citizens Advisory Council relative to helicopter noise. the CAC has asked that you work with the FAA to determine the feasibility of various options, including:

- increasing the altitude of helicopters flying south from VNY over the Sepulveda Basin, thus enabling them to achieve a higher altitude before overflying residential areas;
- providing a dedicated helicopter frequency at Burbank Airport;
- creating a helicopter corridor through Van Nuys and Burbank Airport airspace over the Ventura Freeway, at a higher altitude than is presently permissible;
- enacting a minimum advisory altitude of 1000 feet above ground level on charts for overflying the Santa Monica Mountains;
- restricting hours of operations at VNY by helicopter operators; and
- requiring minimum altitudes for police, fire and other public service helicopters when not engaged in actual patrols or emergency operations.

Additionally, I would like to request that you consider the recommendations of the Communiquet study, "Analysis of Helicopter Activity in Sherman Oaks area" dated June, 1993. In addition to some of those made by the VNY-CAC, Communiquet recommends that you work with the FAA to provide recommended altitudes on helicopter routes, including a helicopter corridor along the Ventura Freeway at an altitude of 1700 feet. They also suggest you amend the Van Nuys Helicopter Letter of Agreement by:

- requiring pilots to climb sooner (above the 1300 ft. ATA required altitude) when headed south through the Sepulveda Pass;

— reshading the area around the freeway interchanges to eliminate the grey (1300 ft. altitude) area northeast of the freeway intersection to allow pilots to gain and maintain altitude; and

— eliminating the use of the route diagonally southeast of the airport which uses City Hall as a reporting point.

Finally, relative to the tour operator, Communiquet recommends that he be required to transit the Ventura Freeway at 1500 ft. MSL.

I believe all these recommendations must be seriously evaluated at this time in an attempt to relive the serious helicopter noise problem in Sherman Oaks and other areas of the San Fernando Valley and beyond. I would request that you bring serious thought to bear on these recommendations and advise me of your findings and results. Thank you for your expedited attention to this request.

Sincerely,

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Supervisor, Third District

ZY:akj

cc: Mr. Richard Close
cc: Ms. Candace Campbell



Homeowners of Encino

56A-7

◆ Serving the Homeowners of Encino ◆

GERALD A. SILVER
President
PO BOX 260205
ENCINO, CA 91426
Phone (818)990-2757

January 17, 1995

Federal Aviation Administration
Ida M. Klepper, Manager, Airmen/Airspace Rules Div.
Attn.: Docket 27371
800 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

RE: ACTION REQUESTED ON 1000' HELO MINIMUM RULE CHANGE

Thank you for your letter of Dec. 21, 1994, in which you indicate that my request for a 1000' minimum altitude rule change is "still under review." I understand the need for the FAA to work in a thoughtful and deliberative manner, but prompt action on this matter is required.

There is an increasing urgency for controls by the FAA on low flying sight seeing and media helicopter operations. The helicopter crash in the Cahuenga Pass in Los Angeles on January 14, 1995 emphasizes the fact that the matter of helicopter minimums are not merely matters of noise but affect the physical safety of persons on the ground and passengers in the air.

The regrettable helicopter crash was reported in the press as conducted by a tour operator and "bound for the helipad atop the Transamerica Building in Downtown Los Angeles, a frequent stop for tour helicopters because passengers can dine at a restaurant in the building..."

Clearly had the FAA acted responsibly and effectively in addressing minimum helicopter altitudes this accident would not have happened, and several lives would not have been lost.

I again call for prompt action on the FAA's part to move forward with the proposed rule change in Docket 27371. Clearly minimum altitudes and controls on sight seeing and media operations over populated areas are needed. Please use your best efforts to see that the FAA gives a fast track to our proposed rule change.

Cordially yours,

Gerald A. Silver
President Homeowners of Encino

cc: Congressmen, Elected officials, Homeowners associations

Stop the Noise!

A Valley-wide community organization seeking to control noise from Van Nuys Airport

Participating Organizations:

BENEDICT CANYON ASSOCIATION
BENEDICT CANYON PROTECTION LEAGUE
CAHUENGA PASS PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION
ENCINO PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION
HOLMBY WESTWOOD PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION
HOMEOWNERS OF ENCINO
NORTH HILLS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
SHERMAN OAKS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
STUDIO CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
STUDIO VILLAGE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
TARZANA PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION
TOP OF THE CANYON ASSOCIATION
VALLEY VILLAGE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
WEST VAN NUYS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
WOODLAND HILLS HOMEOWNERS ORGANIZATION

P.O. Box 260205
ENCINO, CA 91426
PHONE (818)990-2757

January 17, 1995

Congressman Anthony Beilenson
21031 Ventura Bl., Suite 1010
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

RE: NEED FOR ACTION ON HELICOPTER MINIMUM ALTITUDES
FAA Docket 27371

On behalf the members of the Stop the Noise! Coalition, I would like to thank you and the other Congressmen for your continued assistance in working with us and the FAA in bringing about a Rule Change on helicopter minimum altitudes. As you know Homeowners of Encino [Stop the Noise!], filed a proposed rule change with the FAA in June 1994.

The matter of low flying media and sight seeing helicopters continues to be a serious problem for residents in Los Angeles, as well as other parts of the country. The tour helicopter that crashed on January 14, 1995 in the Cahuenga Pass placed thousand of motorists and residents at risk. That helicopter could easily have landed on the heavily trafficked freeway, or on the nearby homes.

According to press reports the helicopter was on a sight-seeing dinner flight conducted between a valley airport and a high-rise office tower in downtown Los Angeles. Operations such as these are often conducted from Van Nuys Airport every ten or twenty minutes during evening hours during some seasons of the year. Other low altitude nuisance operations are conducted by media helicopters operating from the Van Nuys and Burbank Airports. At least a half dozens of these flights leave the airport near 6 AM and cruise at low altitudes down the Ventura Freeway, and through the Cahuenga Pass.

It is unthinkable that there are no minimum altitudes for helicopters operating over populated areas. On behalf of the thousands of residents who are members of the associations on this letterhead, I am asking that you continue to use every possible effort to direct the FAA to approve the proposed Rule Change, establishing a 1000' AGL minimum altitude for non-emergency helicopter flights.

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The FAA is charged with both safety and environmental concerns. It is not only proper, but necessary that they take immediate action on this matter. We need controls that will preclude low flying helicopters that generate a huge amount of noise and place residents at risk. In this day and age, there is simply no logical reason why non-emergency helicopters should be allowed to operate over heavily populated areas, with no minimum altitude restrictions.

Please contact the FAA and ask that the Rule Change in Docket 27371 be put in place immediately.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerald A. Silver".

Gerald A. Silver

cc: Congressmen Waxman, Berman, FAA, Mayor Riordan, LA Dept. of Airports, Elected officials, Homeowners Associations.

JAN 16 1995 SA TIMES

Crash of Helicopter Killed Pilot, Policeman

By CHIP JOHNSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

STUDIO CITY—The two men killed when their helicopter crashed in the Calhoun Pass were identified Sunday as the pilot and a San Bernardino police officer on a dinner excursion flight between Burbank Airport and Downtown Los Angeles.

Timothy Rice, 34, a five-year veteran of the San Bernardino Police Department, died in the 7:47 p.m. Saturday crash, which also seriously injured two female passengers, authorities said. The copier plummeted to earth on the north side of the Hollywood Freeway near Barham Boulevard after it struck high-voltage wires in heavy fog, authorities said.

According to a short press release issued by San Bernardino police, Rice was a patrol officer and the father of five children. A desk officer at the station said Rice was divorced.

The name of the pilot of the Bell Jet Ranger was not released Sunday pending notification of relatives.

An official with the Wolfe Air Co., the Burbank-based aviation company that owned the helicopter, said the pilot was not released Sunday pending notification of relatives.

COPTER: 2 Dead Men Identified

Continued from B1

ter, refused comment on the crash. One of the two women injured in the crash was identified as Diane Brooks, the owner of Aria Tours, an Ontario-based limousine service that offers the dinner excursion flight to its customers, authorities said.

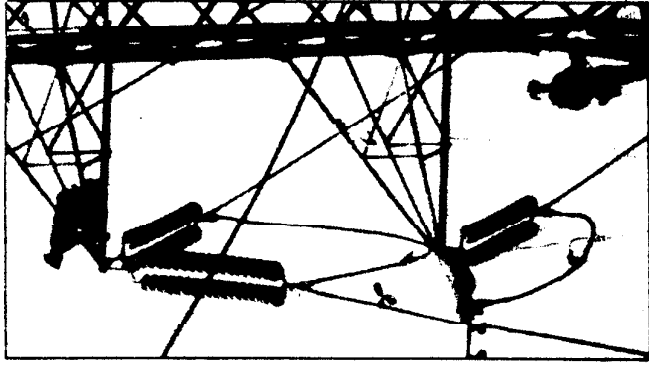
"She was in the helicopter on business," said Paula Correia, a spokeswoman at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where Brooks was in serious condition. "This was an excursion flight."

Brooks suffered cuts and bruises and was expected to undergo wrist surgery Sunday afternoon, Correia said. Brooks, the mother of three children, appeared alert and awake and spoke with her husband, who said he felt blessed that his wife survived the accident, Correia said.

The other woman in the crash had not been identified Sunday. Her relationship to others aboard the flight was unclear. She is listed in critical condition at St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, a hospital spokeswoman said.

"At this time, she is still in critical condition and being treated for her injuries," she said. "She still is a Jane Doe."

The flight was bound for the helipad atop the Transamerica



BOB CAREY / Los Angeles Times

Workers repair power line severed when chopper hit it in fog.

Building in Downtown Los Angeles, a frequent stop for tour helicopters because passengers can dine at a restaurant in the building, said Los Angeles Police Officer Lorrie

Taylor. Heli USA Helicopters, one of the largest helicopter services offering dinner excursions, canceled all flights at 4 p.m. Saturday because of poor visibility and bad weather, said Reagan Stannard, the company's vice president.

Stannard, whose company operates from Santa Monica Airport, said the \$100-per-person dinner excursions and tours are generally canceled whenever visibility is poor.

"If visibility is low, we don't do it because the passenger won't get a chance to see much," she said. The company offers rain checks or refunds for canceled flights.

The fatal Wolfe Air flight was in the air just 12 minutes before the helicopter crashed as a result of "unknown circumstances," a spokeswoman for the Federal Aviation Administration said. An investigation into the crash is being conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board, the federal agency that investigates air accidents.

Initial reports indicate the pilot flew low through the pass to avoid thick fog when the helicopter's rotors struck electrical wires. The craft's rotor landed across the highway, on the north side of the freeway, authorities said.

Chopper Crashes, Killing 2

■ **Accident:** Helicopter in fog hits wires before nose-diving into Hollywood Freeway. Two other passengers are critically hurt.

By MACK REED
and ABIGAIL GOLDMAN
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Two people were killed and two were critically injured Saturday when their Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, traveling in pea-soup fog, hit high-tension wires several hundred feet above the Hollywood Freeway and crashed just south of Barham Boulevard, authorities said.

The helicopter's rotor, separated from the main craft by the wires, flew across the freeway and came to rest beside the northbound lanes, witnesses said, while the body of the helicopter nose-dived into an embankment of ivy on the southbound side.

"They were trying to make it through the Cahuenga Pass in low clouds and they hit the wires," said Frank King, a Los Angeles Police Department helicopter pilot who was on the scene.

Los Angeles city firefighters used the jaws-of-life to extricate the group from the chopper, said fire spokesman Bob Collis. At least some were dressed in formal wear, although their destination was unknown. R. Brett Brice, a spokesman for the California Highway Patrol.

Please see CRASH, B3

Copter Crash Kills 2



STAFF WRITERS / Los Angeles Times

Emergency workers examine the wreckage of a Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopter that crashed next to the Hollywood Freeway on Saturday, killing two men and critically injuring two women. B1

CRASH

Continued from B1

The helicopter was owned by the Wolfe Air Co., based at Burbank Airport, and was flying from Burbank to Los Angeles, according to King.

The identities of the victims—two men and two women—were not immediately available. King said he knew one of the survivors and that she is an employee of an Ontario-based tour company, Aria Tours. He also said that she often accompanies tourists from Burbank Airport to the city.

One survivor was taken to St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, where she was listed in critical condition, and the other, also critically injured, was taken to Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

The crash, reported at 7:47 p.m., wreaked havoc with traffic for at least a mile when authorities shut down several lanes of the freeway. Officials with the National Transportation Safety Board were on their way as firefighters sprayed flame retardant onto fuel spilled from the helicopter, whose

the FAA to try to force helicopters going through the pass to maintain at least 1,000 feet altitude above the ground because of noise and danger," said Jean Luchs, the association's president.

There were no reports of injured motorists.

Staff writer Timothy Williams contributed to this report.

JAN. 15 1995

LA TIMES

2 dead, 2 injured in copter crash beside freeway

By Frank Russell
and Howard Breuer
Daily News Staff Writers

HOLLYWOOD HILLS — A charter helicopter struggling through foggy and rainy skies clipped a power line above the Calahuenga Pass and nose-dived Saturday evening toward the Hollywood Freeway, crashing only a few feet from traffic.

A male pilot and a male passenger on the charter flight died instantly. Two women aboard were badly injured and taken to area hospitals.

"We have two fatalities and one was the pilot," said California Highway Patrol Officer Rhett Price. "The two others are in critical condition and are not expected to live."

One woman, approximately 27, was at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

in Los Angeles with injuries to abdomen, chest and pelvis, hospital spokeswoman Peggy F. Shaff.

Another woman was under observation at Saint Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, said hospital spokeswoman Stephanie Dean. Joan Luchs, a member of the Calahuenga Pass Property Owners Association, said low-flying copters are an everyday problem in the area, and the hillside homeown groups have a 10,000-signature petition asking the Federal Aviation Administration to force pilots to stay at least 10,000 feet from ground.

"I would say a minimum of helicopters a day fly very low over my home," Luchs said. "It's unacceptable in a densely populated area."

See CRASH / Page 9

2 killed in copter crash beside freeway

JAN. 15 1995



Even Yee / Daily News

Firefighters examine the wreckage of a helicopter Saturday beside the southbound Hollywood Freeway.

Life to remove the two critically injured women, said Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman Bob Collins.

One of the women was reported unconscious and the other, while severely injured, was able to talk with rescuers, authorities said.

The wreckage lay twisted nose down on bushes above the right shoulder of the freeway just north of the Highland Avenue exit.

One witness reported a bright flash just before the civilian copter hit the ground. Lights flickered in the Hollywood area at 7:45 p.m., just before the California Highway Patrol received a report of the crash at 7:47 p.m.

CRASH / From Page 4

The Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, which has a maximum capacity of a pilot and three passengers, hit a high-voltage transmission line near the freeway, probably because the pilot was trying to fly below storm clouds, said Department of Water and Power spokeswoman Darlene Battle.

The crash did not cause any power outages, she said.

Jet fuel spilled across the area and firefighters spread foam to guard against the danger of fire. A plume of noxious smoke filtered into the foggy skies.

City firefighters used the Jaws of

The Highway Patrol initially closed all southbound lanes, then reopened two in the far left, said spokeswoman Karen Faciane. The closure was to remain in effect for several hours, she said.

National Transportation Safety Board investigators were investigating the crash.

The identities of the victims were not immediately available, authorities said.

Copter pilot's visibility questioned by investigator

By Terri Hardy
Daily News Staff Writer

San Bernardino police officer Timothy Rice and his date boarded a charter helicopter Saturday in Burbank for a romantic tour of downtown lights and a stop at a restaurant atop the Transamerica Center.

Twelve minutes later, the "City Lights" flight ended in tragedy. Struggling through poor weather, the low-flying chopper snagged a power line and crashed into the Hollywood Freeway (101), killing Rice and the 50-year-old pilot, a

Burbank resident whose name was not released pending notification of relatives.

Rice's date remained in critical condition Sunday, and the woman who arranged the tour was upgraded from critical to serious condition.

The crash prompted renewed calls for increasing helicopter restrictions and raised questions among investigators and aviators.

Don Llorente, senior air safety investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, which is in-

HELICOPTER / Page 13

Copter crash victim mourned; 2 women remain hospitalized

HELICOPTER / From Page 1

investigating the crash, said "it was questionable" if the pilot had the one-mile visibility required by federal air regulations to fly.

Power lines along the Cahuenga Pass are well-marked with orange balls and well-known among local pilots, said Dick Hart, president of National Helicopter Service in Van Nuys.

"It was pretty poor weather conditions," Hart said. "He should not have gone through the Cahuenga Pass."

On Sunday, Rice's family and co-workers grieved for the officer, a father of five children from ages 6 to 14, said his ex-wife, Joyce Rice.

"He was a very compassionate and warm person, a great father, a dedicated father," Rice said.

Besides working for the San Bernardino Police Department since 1989, Rice had been a Baptist minister for 15 years and was going to be installed within a few weeks as new pastor at a Rialto church, she said.

Rice and his date booked the "City Lights" limousine, dinner and helicopter package a week ago through Ontario-based Aria Limousine Service, Llorente said. Aria arranged for the helicopter, operated by Wolf Air.

Officials of Wolf Air could not be reached for comment.

Aria's Diane Brooks, 39, of Ontario regularly traveled with her customers and was on board the helicopter, Llorente said.

On Sunday, she was scheduled to undergo wrist surgery, and also suffered from several broken ribs and numerous cuts and bruises, said Cedars-Sinai Medical Center spokeswoman Paula Correia.

Rice's date, whose name was not released by authorities, remained in critical condition at Saint Joseph Medical Center in Burbank.

The Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopter took off from Burbank Airport at 7:33 p.m. Saturday, bound for the downtown Transamerica Center and its Tower Restaurant, Llorente said.

The helicopter hit a high-voltage transmission line, sending up a bright flash. The craft narrowly missed motorists, crashing belly-up on the freeway shoulder just north of the Highland Avenue exit.



Evan Yee/Daily News

The wrecked helicopter sits on a hill by the southbound lanes of the Hollywood Freeway, just north of the Highland Avenue exit.

The twisted wreckage tied up freeway traffic in both directions, and was finally cleared about 2:50 a.m., according to the California Highway Patrol.

Low-flying helicopters traveling from Burbank and Van Nuys airports have caused concern among several community groups in the San Fernando Valley, said Joan Luchs, president of the Cahuenga Pass Property Owners Association.

The association is part of a coalition of 15 homeowners groups stretching from Woodland Hills to the Hollywood Hills — a coalition called Stop the Noise! — that is calling for several restrictions on helicopters, including curfews and forcing pilots to fly at a 1,000-foot minimum, Luchs said.

"It was inappropriate for the pilot to fly in that kind of weather, in fog and rain," Luchs said. "If they had implemented the 1,000-foot minimum, this accident never would have happened."

She stressed the group did not oppose law enforcement or other emergency crews' use of helicopters, but was focusing on what she called "unnecessary flights" by news media and dinner and sight-

seeing tours, she said.

The Los Angeles Department of Airports — which operates Los Angeles International, Van Nuys, Palmdale and Ontario airports, but not Burbank Airport — has conducted a study on helicopter trips from Van Nuys because of community concern, said Jack Driscoll, executive director of the department.

"We're looking at what helicopters aren't behaving properly," he said.

Results of that study, and later recommendations that might include limiting the number of flights and route changes, will be provided to the city Airport Commission.

A few months ago, Mayor Richard Riordan asked the Federal Aviation Administration to consider forcing helicopters to fly at least 1,000 above the ground, Driscoll said.

"So far, we've heard nothing," he said.

The altitude requirement was sent to the FAA after it was recommended by the Van Nuys Airport's community advisory committee, he said.

Daily News Staff Writer Betty Kwong contributed to this report.

Dead pilot was from Burbank

Brother calls flying Marendi's first love

By Terri Hardy
Daily News Staff Writer

Tom Marendi walked along the shoulder of the Hollywood Freeway Monday, the site where his brother, John, died Saturday when the helicopter he was piloting hit a power line and plunged to the ground.

Marendi picked up a few pieces of the wreckage scattered on the shoulder, and kept them as a remembrance.

"You're just not sure what to do in times like this," he said later from his home.

The pilot was identified Monday as Andre J. Marendi, 50, of Burbank. Friends and family knew him as John, his brother said.

On Saturday, Marendi and three passengers took off from Burbank in poor weather, bound for downtown Los Angeles. The "City Lights" tour included sight-seeing and was to land atop the Transamerica Center for dinner at the Tower restaurant.

Passenger Timothy Rice, a San Bernardino police officer and father of five also died in the crash. Rice's date, whose name was not released, was upgraded from critical to serious condition Monday, said a spokeswoman at St. Joseph's Medical Center. Diane Brooks, the Ontario businesswoman who arranged the tour, was in serious condition at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

Tom Marendi said his brother worked in transportation at area studios, drove trucks long-distance, and was a disc jockey for a country-western radio station in Long Beach. But his first love was flying.

"It was a way of life for him," Marendi said.

Don Llorente, senior air safety investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the crash, said Sunday that "it was questionable" if the pilot had the one-mile visibility required by federal air regulations to fly that foggy night.

But Marendi said his brother was known as an extremely cautious pilot, and he doesn't understand the concerns.

"So many people said he was always so careful, it just doesn't make sense," he said.

Divorced, Marendi is also survived by a 24-year-old daughter, Heidi, and his 82-year-old mother, Tom Marendi said.